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No. 24



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*Old Haunts in
New Orleans*

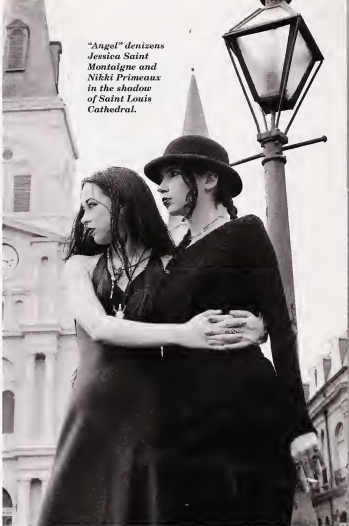
"Très gothique, non?"

New Orleans, the vampire and voodoo Mecca of America, home to such dark luminaries as Anne Rice, Poppy Z. Brite, Trent Reznor and Marilyn Manson; a city with more hauntings and more murders than any other in this great and scary land of ours. It is a place which reeks of moldering decay, of the perverse, the surreal, it's sunken atmosphere sweet to the senses of artists and adventurers in search of lower paths, paths traveled by the likes of **The Vampire Lestat** and Harold Angel, the Faustian anti-hero of the film **Angel Heart**. The unique and poignant confluence of Cajun and Caribbean cultures is at its magical apex in the French Quarter, where young male hustlers, palmists and tarot readers, and voodoo practitioners ply their ungodly trades in the very shadow of Saint Louis Cathedral. Dating back to 1718, this elegant gothic edifice is the oldest cathedral in America. It seems to float, mute and mournful, like a vision of the Madonna over the mimes and seers of Jackson Square and an entire city of lost souls.

The very fallacious of New Orleans in general, and the Quarter in particular, is the source of its allure, its enchantment, which shimmers in the gas light of narrow cobblestone streets, in the glowing windows of whimsical antebellum and Napoleonic homes, in the eyes of drug-addled street children and the perverses and pushers who prey upon them. And on the Quarter's fringe, like some macabre refuse washed up on its distant shore, is New Orleans' oldest cemetery, Saint Louis #1, and the equally gothic and ghostly abode of the dead, "Angel," the Big Easy's paramount nightspot for the children of the night. Although the old burial ground plays host to the occasional nocturnal soirée, the real *danse macabre* takes place at this cavernous and lavishly decorated club, where those of the "death rock" persuasion gather for wine and song all week long.

And in keeping with the ghostly and otherworldly is the Westgate Gallery, America's only museum

*"Angel" denizens
Jessica Saint
Montaigne and
Nikki Primeaux
in the shadow
of Saint Louis
Cathedral.*



dedicated to Azrael, the Angel of Death, in the finest tradition of stylish morbidity. One need look no further than this to know what darkness lurks in the heart of this place of spirits and menace, this forbidden paradise on the banks of the Mississippi. And like that great waterway snaking through America's heartland, this is where the long and winding trail of error terminates, in sordid alleyways, be-

hind rusty wrought iron gates, on soiled and blood-stained sheets; it is the end of the line, damned and sublime. †

Angel Club: 2441 Bayou Rd.
(off Esplanade, 3 minutes from
the French Quarter). (504)940-0666

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(the purple and black French
Provincial house). (504)899-3077

THE POPPY AND THE LOTUS

LITERARY REVIEW AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY FRED H. BERGER MAKE-UP AND STYLING BY ROMAN



*"And then there are waifs who wander
the world without gulle, seeming
to offer themselves up to whatever
wants them."*

Poppy Z. Brite's EXQUISITE CORPSE

Upon a midnight dreary in December's icy bosom, I, your humble editor, commenced the reading of **EXQUISITE CORPSE**, a black tome penned by a graveyard pixy whose name, **Poppy Z. Brite**, is as poetic and full of dark magic as the splendid nocturne of this, her latest literary masterpiece, the third and most visceral novel of a trend-setting career in erotic horror fiction. It was the 7th of the month, the very night I was to attend a fête in honor of Propaganda Magazine at Manhattan's freak club extraordinaire **Click & Drag**, an evening of decadent delights à la *Berlin Cabaret*, an event which, though hampered by ice storms and viral epidemics, required my presence. But confined as I was to my sickbed, in the grip of flu and fever, I sought to distract myself from this ill-timed malady with Poppy's tale of serial murder and cannibalism, sadism and necrophilia, high-risk sex and AIDS — a veritable Pandora's box of ultra-violent depravity, frightfully intimate in its familiarity with sexual psychoses and torrid desire in the face of disease and death. Needless to say, with a temperature fluctuating between 99° and 101°, thrills and chills of such an infernal order were not exactly what the doctor recommended, but perhaps it's what the book demanded — maximum terror And somewhere out there, even at the gates, lurked the most fearsome virus of all — HIV, the invisible protagonist of **EXQUISITE CORPSE**, a dreaded monster without peer, save one — a figure every bit as much a force of nature, who would realize the savage destiny of everyone involved, and then move on like a walking pestilence.

But with the flash of fear comes the warmth of infatuation as the author lovingly fleshes-out her story's object of desire, a most epicene and exotic creature, a 20-year-old Vietnamese beauty so guileless and vulnerable, it's as if he were pleading for annihilation at the hands of a winsome and overpowering stranger. Described as "the ideal victim" by a killer who thrives on lascivious acquiescent youths, this stunning Asian-American goth boy is truly a feast for the eyes, and for the palate, as his suitor-to-be would have it. In the sunken miasma of the New Orleans subterranean, where desperate men in search of "smooth-skin, long-limbed boys" prey upon drug-addled clubkids and runaways, the one named Tran is the fairest of them all. Pursued by Luke Ransom, an HIV+ counterculture novelist from San Francisco, and by Jay Byrne, a gorgeous and dissolute dead-ringer for Julian Sands from the city's French Quarter and old Cajun money, this lamb among wolves would hardly seem to stand a chance. And with a smile "as sweet as sex, as succulent as meat," and an allure which was "not so much androgynous as beyond gender entirely" (to quote Poppy's effusive prose), Tran was the prize for which Luke would give-up junk and all his many young Oriental paramours (Luke was a "rice queen" of long-standing). And Jay, thinking him "a gift of whatever dark

gods he appeased with his obsessions," might even spare the kid, something he'd never done once a boy had willfully thrown his own life away by begging to be his submissive bugged bride. Both of these predatory males are powerful and deadly in their own right, and it is to them that this delicate waif in black leggings, lace and eye-liner offers himself up as a sweet sacrifice, his dark almond-shaped eyes like black pools of longing, his lithe body aching to be filled and then reduced to a romantic ruin like some Parthenon or victory arch of antiquity.

In that Poppy claims to be "a gay man who happens to have been born a woman," and inasmuch as Luke is something of an autobiographical figure, thus qualifying her as gay literati and a connoisseur of delectable Asian swish, she is able to flaunt her iconoclastic colors and to expound on her fantasies of sampling boys from every corner of the Orient as Luke boasts of doing. And inasmuch as Jay is modeled after her cannibalistic idol **Jeffrey Dahmer**, albeit idly rich and dressed to kill in basic black, this craving for slice-eyed lovelies is re-emphasized by the simple fact that the most vivid and scandalous episode of Dahmer's murder spree involved a 14-year-old Laotian boy. Running stark-naked and bleeding through the streets of Milwaukee, the boy's attempt to save himself was thwarted by two policemen, who in their callous indifference accepted Dahmer's explanation of a lover's quarrel, and returned the traumatized victim to the killer's custody; the youngster was never seen alive again. With Jay and Tran in the respective roles of the hunter and the hunted, this infuriating scene is played out once more in **EXQUISITE CORPSE**, as much for its ghastly spectacle as to serve as an indictment of the casual malice of those sworn to 'protect and serve,' especially when it comes to gays and people of color.

And what Far Eastern delight did Poppy partake of you ask; well, dear reader, allow me to tell you. I am tempted to surmise that by means of the intense visualization which the author obviously employed in the development of Tran's character, she was possessed of the faculty to summon from the murky depths of her imagination the physical manifestation of what her heart truly desired. The being thus called forth was a dazzling lotus blossom of a lad, a diaphanous Chinese youth immersed in the gothic subculture, and who shared her taste in boys and magic mushrooms, although the real *magik* lay not so much in hallucinogenic vegetables but in the incarnation of a compelling vision. This is the proof of her power, the certainty of the flesh, with all its joy and burden. And thus did her Asian darling appear unto her, a suitor modeled after a noncorporate archetype who reigns as Tran in the realm of the infernal gods, that is to say Poppy's libido, and hence the very pages of **EXQUISITE CORPSE**.



Poppy Z. Brite, the black widow, spins her tale of love and death.

I must hereby apologize to Poppy for attempting to uncover her trick, but I too have learned of the pleasures and perils of wanton visualization. And for the sake of a fascinating anecdote, as related to me by the author, and to conceal the identity of her lover, now ex-lover (goth boys being "too high maintenance" by her reckoning), this luscious lad shall henceforth be referred to by his drag name *Kitty*. For as fate, and Poppy's proclivities, would have it, the youth was the prettiest waitress at Lucky Cheng's, a French Quarter Chinese restaurant famous for its transvestite serving girls. And in accordance with a sinister plot line, spun like so much web by the black widow, Kitty was stopped by Canadian customs officials while attempting to re-enter the United States from his native Canada. Perhaps he was too exotic for his own good; his feline features framed by somber tresses and slender form all clad in black hardly presenting a picture of lily-white innocence. But their suspicion quickly turned to alarm upon catching a glimpse of the manuscript he was carrying, the first 40 to 50 pages of *EXQUISITE CORPSE*, which to their provincial bourgeois minds looked unerringly like the diary of a serial murderer; never mind that the one who possessed it was a frail wisp of a boy with just the sort of face that seemed to have "abuse me" written all over it. Alas, his was the poetry and irresistibly smooth, fine-boned visage of the "perfect victim." And with his actual daily diary replete with astrological entries, tarot readings and references to mushrooms and cannabis, the borderland bullies subjected the "little pervert" to a grueling 8-hour interrogation session which ended with an official refusal to grant him entry into the U.S. It was only after several formal psychological evaluations that a browbeaten Kitty, spluttering his indignation, was permitted to cross the border. Rest assured, we can all sleep better at night knowing the Mounties "always get their man," or *fag boy*, as the case may be.

Such are the pitfalls of the prodigy, the travails of the daemon lover carrying a message, the meaning of which not even he can fully comprehend, but which would become known in the fullness of time. Poppy was quick to dismiss this misadventure as a nuisance brought on by "puritanical, paranoiac bureaucrats." However, as she was soon to discover, the same label could have just as aptly been applied to Dell Publishing, the firm which had the boldness of vision to publish her first two novels, but which shrank from the baleful opus of *EXQUISITE CORPSE*. Although *LOST SOULS* and *DRAWING BLOOD* both deal with themes of drug abuse, violence, and male homosexuality in the framework of a vampire tale and ghost story, in that order, her subsequent novel went well beyond the pale. Dell flatly rejected the book by reason of its "irredeemable obsession with cannibalism, necrophilia and disease," not to mention that the pornography and gore are served up in even more generous portions than in her earlier works. After being turned down by Harper Collins, publisher of *LOVE IN VEIN* (a compilation of short

vampire stories edited and introduced by our own Ms. Brite), and by Penguin, the UK-publisher of *LOST SOULS*, *DRAWING BLOOD*, and Poppy's short story anthology *SWAMP FOETUS*, it seemed as if her fangs had been effectively pulled, never again to pierce lovingly the collective neck of her devoted readership.

The agents of political correctness and of creeping conservatism, those strange bedfellows who together soil the sheets behind the placid facade of *mass culture*, had apparently succeeded in silencing what is arguably the most genuine and articulate voice of an alienated and dysfunctional generation, the one they euphemistically refer to in corporate media boardrooms as *Generation X*. But then along came Simon & Schuster to save our heroine, our Saint of the Pit, from the fate of the banned; *EXQUISITE CORPSE* would have its publisher, and one exceeding in prestige all those other faint-of-heart book peddlers who failed to rise to the occasion. Like Luke Ransom, Poppy's alter ego in *EXQUISITE CORPSE*, she revels in the fact that her work is either "revered or reviled," herself having "no use for the middle ground." But how else are serious readers to react to such explosive material, whether it be Luke's debut novel, "Faith In Poison," or Poppy's latest literary bombshell?

Influenced by William S. Burroughs and Bauhaus (according to Luke, Peter Murphy had once hoped he'd die of AIDS in Paris), Poppy's over-the-top style is a remarkable synthesis of beauty and Evil, and hence a powerful emotive enzyme capable of striking a raw nerve in some, and paradoxically in others, of stroking the very soul by way of the flesh. Only a writer as possessed of such poetic eloquence as this could ever hope to accomplish the mystic translation of a litany of debauchery and mayhem into a psalm of adoration in praise of the naked body as communion wafer, of gaping wounds as portals to divine revelation, body fluids as the hallowed medium of love, gushing arteries as founts of secret knowledge, disease as precious gift ("yeah, sure it is"), AIDS as martyrdom, torture and defilement of the dead as sacred ritual. Poppy describes Tran as "drop-dead beautiful,"

and from this postulation arrives at her essential conclusion, that beauty's ultimate triumph is through its destruction, a delectable thought which has inspired writers from the 19th century romantics to the current menagerie of literary anarchists. But it is this author who, by way of *EXQUISITE CORPSE*, has taken nihilism to unwanted heights of faith, a faith in the Abyss expressed by a kind of *talk dirty to me-cum-Sermon On The Mount*.

O Sweet infamy, where shall your black wings next carry the heart and soul of this impish young writer? And lo, by way of a reply, a flutter upon the breeze whispers, "Verily, I say unto you, *Courtney Love: The Real Story*." Come autumn of 1997, Simon & Schuster will be releasing this unauthorized, but truly definitive, biography in all of its wretched glory, witness the 17-year-old pop star to be working as a stripper in the sex clubs of Japan, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. This phase of Courtney's



"That smile . . .
it was as sweet as sex,
as succulent as meat."

tortured path to fame and fortune is dealt with in some detail as befits Poppy's yen (pardon the pun) for all things Oriental.

"But I'm over it," says Poppy regarding her past reputation as a lover of finely made, amber-coloured youths of the distant East. Although still intrigued by the splendor of Asian culture in all its many facets, her desire to luxuriate endlessly in bed with a delicious mandarin sex kitten has been fully sated and left her with some regrets. Even so, these regrets are bitter-sweet, like those of almost every phase of Poppy's 30 years in this mortal coil, from her early days as a goth girl to her own stint as an exotic dancer, and finally to her latest incarnation as counterculture sibil.

After my interview and photo-shoot with this fascinating bard of the underground at her home in New Orleans, I dined alone at the elegant Lucky Cheng's to sample their renowned Japanese and Chinese cuisine, as well as their stable of gender-bending Asian boys (alas, Kitty no longer works there). I ordered a shrimp dumpling appetizer and an entrée of chicken with sweet and sour sauce, and looking into the strikingly seductive face of the young waitress, who was all heels and coquetry and only too eager to please, I thought, "Poppy you rascal," and muttered to myself, "what's to get over?" Inquisitive as to that barely audible comment, the youth asked me to repeat it, and thinking fast I said, "and hold the fortune cookies." Needless to say, the meal was exquisite. †

Tran, "the ideal victim."

THE SISTERS OF MERCY



*Home is where
the "Heartland" is.*

REVIEW AND PHOTOS BY FRED H. BERGER

God is good; I have heard the music of the spheres and seven stones weep. And so it came to pass that the Sisters of Mercy deigned to undertake a solitary North American performance as part of their summer 1997 tour. It was June 28th and the children in black from near and far had converged upon Philadelphia for the Dark Harvest III festival. Never had any city ever seen such a mass turnout of pallid necromantic youth; they filled South Street (the hip shopping district) with their uneasy presence in the hours before the show. The music of the Sisters blared from an endless funeral procession of deathrock-mobiles, festooned with the iconography of their patron saints—Siouxsie, The Cure, NIN, Christian Death, et al.

Not since 1990, with the release of the *Vision Thing* album and its adjunct tour, had the much revered Andrew Eldritch, the very *body and soul* of the Sisters, granted his forlorn loyalists a new offering of musical enchantments. It therefore should have come as no surprise that they would make of this night a holy pilgrimage, and yet it was a startling thing to behold just the same. I do not use this religious terminology lightly, as this phenomenon, this cult, is completely informed by sentiments of worship, redemption, and yes, even sacrifice. There were those who crossed oceans and continents to be in the presence of their dark prince at the appointed hour, at the Electric Factory, a warehouse-cum-rock venue-cum-post-apocalyptic shrine. It

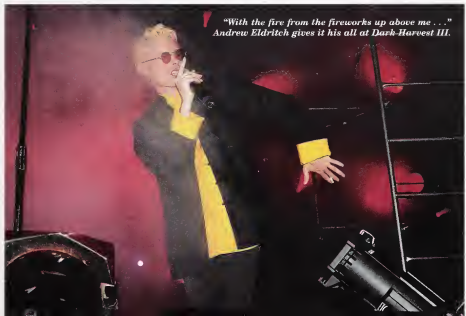
was like a scene out of the Sisters' "This Corrosion" video with its ragged black-clad minions in clusters of idolatry around the gaunt messianic figure of a rain-soaked Eldritch. Covered in sweat gleaming in laser lights and darkness they met their hero's gaze through rose-colored glasses, his bleached blond *Booze cut* and black and yellow Chinese attire transcending mere rock star fashion, oozing something more of the decadent philosopher king.

His choice of melodies traversed the entire glorious span of auditory delights from the band's restless origins in the early 80s to its rather shadowy existence of recent vintage, from the anthemic and turbulent "Temple of Love" (1983) to the introspective and crestfallen "Something Fast" (1990). In all, some twenty songs, classics all, were performed with a fervor most often associated with great blood-lettings, and a passion not seen outside of history's great love stories. But it was Pink Floyd's "Comfortably Numb" transmuting ever so exquisitely into the Sisters' "Some Kind of Stranger" that seemed to part the billowing pillars of smoke which persistently enveloped the stage, and through which Andrew's stark figure could be seen with arms outstretched, outlined by piercing beacons of red and white light. It was as if this tidal force of immense emotional energy surged over the footlights and cut a bleeding swath clear through the collective mass of 3,600 tightly packed goth kids, entranced like deer in the high-beams of an onrushing tractor-trailer.

Andrew, Sister superior, have mercy on these tender boys and girls who grovel at your feet; your fondness and contempt are a cruel test for their callow minds. You express your disdain for goth, deny any association with it, refer to it as "the G-word," and strike *Sunshine Blind* and *The New Creatures* from the list of opening bands to prove your point.* And yet, you put on the show of their lives, bow with the utmost gratitude and humility to the resounding applause of an almost exclusively gothic audience, and come out for two encores. When was the last time you've seen so many wistful tear-stained faces, so much running mascara in a single sold-out venue? But then you were quoted in the July 1991 issue of *RIP Magazine* as saying, "For me, at least, sex has got to have an element of violence in it to be truly great." So, if I may extrapolate, by the same token love can only be truly great if there is an element of hate in it. Being an easy lover is for wankers I suppose. "Beat me, kiss me, hit me, hold me," is the gothic mantra. And so it goes. But semantics and pop psychology aside, the Sisters of Mercy made history that night in the City of Brotherly Love, and for that singular and solitary evening it truly was the mythic "Heartland." †

* *Switchblade Symphony* survived *Andrew's Night of the Long Knives* by donning a less conspicuously gothic guise and smiling a lot; they opened for the Sisters to everyone's delight and graduated with honors.

! "With the fire from the fireworks up above me . . ."
Andrew Eldritch gives it his all at Dark Harvest III.



ROZZ WILLIAMS

Prince of Darkness



Investigation by Kristen Connors

Larry Green

There have been so many musical incarnations of Rozz Williams that it takes even avid followers of the "dark prince" a good six months to catch up to what he's doing at any given moment. By the time anyone does catch on, he's moved on to something else. This is no accident.

"I hate doing just one thing for too long," says Rozz. "I don't want to be pigeonholed or labeled. I also don't like doing something that everyone expects me to do. That's why I'm always trying different things with different people."

The last time I saw Rozz live, he was on tour with his old Christian Death bandmate, Gitane Demonie. That was for the 1995 CD they did together called **DREAM HOME HEARTACHE**. It was a fascinating collection of songs. It was obvious that Rozz and Gitane still had that magical chemistry between them, not unlike the kind they had back in the old Christian Death days of the mid-1980s.

"We met while I was touring in Europe in '94," recalls Rozz. "She came to one of my shows in Germany. It was kind of awkward at first because we hadn't even seen each other since the end of the

ASHES tour in '85. [That was the last album Rozz worked on in Christian Death with Gitane and Valor.] Because the spirit in the band wasn't on the greatest terms, I felt I couldn't work with the others in the future. But Gitane and I hit it off... in fact, so well that we decided to record something together. It was originally supposed to be just a single, but we had such a good time working with one another, it turned into a whole album."

As all followers of the Christian Death saga probably know, the rift between Rozz and Valor has not been so easily patched up. Rozz still feels betrayed by the fact that Valor kept the Christian Death name for his own band, even though he wasn't in the original line-up when Rozz put the ensemble together at the tender age of 18 back in the early '80s in LA.

"It doesn't bother me the way it used to," says Rozz. "I just find it a little sad that Valor has to use a name that four high school kids came up with a million years ago in order to get some attention he can't get on his own. When he uses the name Christian Death, it confuses people. They still think I'm associated with him somehow, espe-

"Tomorrow Belongs to Me:" Rozz pulls no punches at Philadelphia's Dark Harvest II Festival.



Fred Bernger

cally when his band still plays *xxx* material. But I'm trying to not let it bother me anymore. It's old news. It's better to just look ahead."

It Rozz does anything, he's definitely looking ahead. Every time you turn around, he's on to the next project. Literally...be it Shadow Project with Eva O., *Premature Ejaculation* with Chuck Collision, *Daukus Karotis* with Hunt Sales, or his spoken-word material. He has also recently completed an album with EXP, a project he worked on with an old bandmate from Shadow Project, the one and only Paris.

"It was good to get back with Paris to work on the *EXP* CD," says Rozz. "It really gives us the chance to experiment with new sounds—something we weren't able to do in the confines of the Shadow Project material." [The EXP release is on Triple X Records, as are the other Razz projects].

Though he may dart from side project to side project, it is the spoken-word releases that Rozz puts most of his heart and soul into. If you're searching for the "real" Rozz, you'll more likely find it in his spoken-word material than anywhere else. He recently put out *THE WHORSE'S MOUTH* (also on Triple X). It contains a truly mesmerizing collection of "ramblings" that cut way beneath the surface and expose the raw nerves of this often troubled troubadour.

"*THE WHORSE'S MOUTH* was like a therapy session on tape for me," explains Rozz. "As with *EVERY KING A BASTARD'S SON* [Rozz's spoken-word release in 1992], it was cathartic in the sense that it let me vent what was bothering me at the time—a way of exorcising my demons. Sometimes I do go overboard, however, and reveal much more about myself than I originally intended to. In fact, with *EVERY KING...*, after I recorded it, I wanted to tell Ciopatra [the record co. that released it] not to put the CD out. I really didn't want to expose that much of myself to the public. It's like standing naked in front of an audience and letting them evaluate everything about you. It's not a very comfortable thing. All of *WHORSE'S MOUTH* was written with my roommate, Ryan Gammer, while we were both heavily addicted to heroin. This theme runs throughout the whole CD."

This particular release lets us take a harrowing peak into the chilling sociopathy that tormented Rozz back in his heroin days. (or should we say "daze?") Pieces like "Fire of Uncommon Velocity" and "HEB Only s/n" scream out the machinations of a tortured soul. "Collapsed in holy withdrawal" goes one of the verses.

Now, with demons exorcised, the Prince of Darkness is back on track. He recently rejoined with Eva O. to record a new Shadow

Project CD. (Hooray!) And they said it couldn't be done.

"This Shadow Project release is more acoustic than the others," he says. "The sound is somewhat different, but I think our longtime fans will enjoy it." [Keep on movin' Razz.] ↑



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BOUND FOR GLORY

Restraint but yet untamed, punk rock diva Kembra Pfahler plays to our fantasies in a luxurious black leather straightjacket. And for those who are enamored of her as the submissive, the S&M thriller **Cheerleaders In Bondage** is sure to arouse as she is thrown to the merciless "coach" for some well-deserved punishment. This is one of the finer productions in the *Mistress Kembra* video series in which we find our sultry heroine in either the role of the helpless victim or the brutal bitch; it varies from flick to flick, so choose your poison!

"MUSIC IS MY MASTER"

Fronting her musical assault troupe, **The Voluptuous Horror of Karen Black**, Kembra projects a baleful persona in blue skin and serpentine dreadlocks, a fearsome hybrid of an ancient Scottish warrior and shrieking Fury of old. As much performance art collective as band, their stage show runs the gamut from high camp to the surreal, a kind of **Rocky Horror Picture Show** meets **Hieronymus Bosch** (i.e. Kembra and her lingerie-glad pixies being eaten alive by a huge saher-toothed Valentine's Day heart). And consider this, it's been going on for seven years now! Their latest CD, "A NATIONAL HEALTH CARE," essentially a *teen-age Frankenstein* romp through a dysfunctional American landscape, is currently available at better record stores and mental health clinics near you.

BULLISH ON KEMBRA

Cashing in on her underground celebrity status, this singular wonder woman has appeared in print as one of Calvin Klein's hipper-than-thou jeans models as well as a stark and angular mannequin for the upscale fetish designer Catherine Coatney. With non-conformity rapidly gaining value in world commodities markets, Kembra, Inc. is looking like a hot investment opportunity (I bought my shares, did you?).

"MY KILLER VALENTINE"

At their Saint Valentine's Day show in New York early this year, judging from the 500+ punks, drag queens, and zombies in attendance, I concluded that nothing more was needed to convince me of **Karen Black's** firm hold on the hearts and minds of the lunatic fringe. But just as I said to myself, "Alright, O.K., I get it," it was revealed to me that my smug take on the whole thing fell somewhat short of any real understanding. For it was at that very moment that Kembra proceeded to read aloud a love letter from a Florida death row inmate who had been enticed by her appearance in *Celebrity Sleuth's* "Women of Fantasy" issue. It was a condemned man's impassioned plea for a snap-shot of her bare derriere with a photo of himself (pre-incarceration) held alongside for the purpose of inciting the envy of prisoners and jailers alike.

Doing the honors, with Polaroid camera in hand, was guitarist and sexual samurai, the most honorable Samoa. With her gaping green eyes and succulent hindquarters aimed point blank into the lens, two flashes, and a roar from the crowd, the deed was done. It was, in the words of our ever-lovin' *vamp of camp*, "the coolest thing!"

Only then had it dawned upon my less-than-totally-hip brow, that the hold upon the far-out rabble which I perceived earlier that night was more in the vein of a *death grip*, and that this tantalizing Blue Angel was something which a man sentenced to fry could hold onto, up until the final hour, the bitter end: "Mistress Kembra, deliver us!" †

WRITTEN BY FRED H. BERGER

"BLUE ANGEL" PHOTOS BY
NED AMBLER

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FIRE & BRIMSTONE
By Jason Huflinger

LOVE & ROCKETS

The guitar is burnt to a crisp. It is literally just ashes. This is what's on the cover of the latest Love & Rockets CD, *SWEET F.A.* The image is obviously metaphorically very significant. The title, too, is inextricably tied in with this theme of total annihilation. To understand why this particular imagery was used is to understand the incredible trials and tribulations the band, Love & Rockets went through to get this album completed.

It began with the members of Love & Rockets — Daniel Ash, David J., and Kevin Haskins — breaking up the band in 1982 after having been together for a number of years and doing quite well with successful albums like *SEVENTH DREAM OF TEENAGE HEAVEN* and *EARTH, SUN AND MOON*. They pursued solo projects for the next couple of years because, as guitarist Daniel Ash puts it, "When you're in a band, it's like being married. You have to get away from each other. You need a break to get some psychic R + R, and make things fresh again. The creative process gets stale if you fall into a routine. Even though we were having some commercial success at

the time, we just really needed to get away from each other for awhile. It made getting back together that much more enjoyable and inspirational."

While Love & Rockets were in limbo as a band, their longtime record label, Beggars Banquet, began to lose confidence in them. And when the 1994 reunion CD, *HOT TRIP TO HEAVEN*, bombed big time, Beggars dropped Daniel and the boys like a bad habit. But, by that time, they had already begun work on the next album — half of it being recorded in a prestigious (and expensive) San Francisco studio.

"Suddenly," recalls Daniel, "we didn't have a pot to piss in. Though we signed with American [Recordings], our budget was very limited. We decided to move the sessions down to Silverlake in L.A. — someone's house actually."

And so they settled into one of Rick Rubin's houses. As head of American, he often puts up bands in these homes with built-in recording studios. Work on the album continued until a very strange incident took place involving Genesis P-Orridge of Psychic TV and a voodoo doll.

"Genesis was a friend of ours, and he was staying over for a couple of days," says Daniel. "Someone had given him this bizarre-looking voodoo doll with a red band around its neck, which is the symbol of fire. It's a long story. But anyway, the very next morning, at around 7 a.m., someone went downstairs to get a glass of water or something, and the whole mixing console in the rehearsal room was engulfed in flames, which spread through the whole downstairs of the house. We barely escaped with our lives. Everyone was jumping out of windows n' shit. Genesis had to jump off the roof. It's odd now thinking about it, because that damn doll was given to him, and he's the one who got really hurt. What's really strange is... (pause)... that doll was lying right near where the fire started. They say it was a short in the mixing deck. I don't even like talking about it anymore. I don't want to glamorize voodoo or anything else involved with the occult, because it works. It's not something just anyone should be fucking around with. The fire destroyed all our equipment, including a couple of guitars I had for a long time." [Thus the cover of the CD].

Is it just us at Propaganda, or does anyone else see a pattern developing here? Didn't this same thing happen to Skinny Puppy when they were involved with Genesis P-Orridge, Rick Rubin and the occult? (See issue #23.) You're permitted to draw your own inferences. Regardless, now Love & Rockets really had no pot to piss in. Work on the album had to begin all over from scratch.

"One thing positive did come out of this whole mess," says Daniel. "It put some emotion back into our writing and recording. Adversity does make good fodder for songs. We even named the album **SWEET F.A.** because of what happened. In England, it stands for 'sweet fuck' at—which means you have nothing to your name—zip, zilch. That's the way we felt after the fire, so the title is very appropriate. There was this big void we had fallen into."

There is, in deed, a noticeably darker mood to this album than the last couple of Love & Rockets releases. Songs like "Judgement Day" and "Sad and Beautiful World" reflect that somber atmosphere surrounding the band at that time. Some of the material is quite reminis-

cent of the early work Daniel, David and Kevin did with the legendary Bauhaus. In fact, Daniel says he had the same feelings and emotions working on this album that he had when Bauhaus was first formed.

"There was that same kind of magic," explains Daniel. "The song, 'Bela Lugosi's Dead,' was written in only a couple of days. And that was only a couple of weeks after Bauhaus was formed. We had so much creative energy built up within us, that it all just came spewing out. With **SWEET F.A.**, that same kind of energy was released. I really believe it was because of all the crap we went through to get this album out. It energized us somehow. Losing everything you have can definitely be a source of inspiration."

The question now is, can we expect that same kind of creative energy from Love & Rockets in the future, or will it first take another calamity of some sort to spur these guys on?

"Actually," answers Daniel, "we've already started work on the next album. We're trying to do something radically different. Some of the music we've recorded already is as divergent from everything else out there as Devo's stuff was to everything back in the early 80's. You're probably wondering, 'why the hell is he bringing up Devo?'. I mention them only because they made such a big impact on me when I first heard them over the car radio. I remember having to actually pull the car over to the side of the road, and go 'what the fuck is this?' I've always wanted to make music that had that kind of an effect on people... where they go, 'what the fuck?'"

"It's a fine line to tread, because you don't want to create something really weird just to be gratuitously different. It's a balancing act. Cross your fingers." [What? Plain old voodoo isn't good enough this time?]

Love & Rockets have always been on the cutting edge of being different from everyone else. This is certainly the case with **SWEET F.A.**, which has been described by many critics as "anti-formula" and "completely unorthodox." You'll find it to be very interesting, to say the least. For more information on the band, contact: <http://americanrecordings.com> on the internet. ♪



Kevin Haskins, Daniel Ash and David J. breath fire on the latest Love & Rockets CD.

Even Blondes Get The Blues

Who said "boys don't cry."
Jamie at 16, 1992



Jamie's been on the streets five years; he's 21 now - everyone's amazed he's still alive. On the "old main drag," like the song goes in *My Own Private Idaho*, drifting, drugs, you know, the usual. I first photographed him in San Diego when he'd just been thrown out for piercing his nose and ears; his parents were cops, and called him "freak" and "taggot."



By an odd twist of fate, I ran into Jamie in '97; that's him on the lobby rug of some dive rooming house in San Francisco. I didn't ask too many questions, just gave him some money for posing, bought him a meal and thanked him for his time. "See you down the road," he said. "Probably so," I replied.



By Beauty Possessed

IN THE WORKS OF JEAN GENET AND DOSZDAN

Photo above: Prisoner of Love

"... his beauty frightened me... I wanted him to live in a grave, in a dark, deep tomb, the only dwelling worthy of his monstrous presence. It would be lit by a candle, and he would live in it on his knees or crouching."

"He turned his head a little. His open mouth was already a fissure through which all his tenderness passed and through which the world entered to possess him."

Photo left: Death Loves A Drummer

"... the horsemen, the knights, the S.S., the Hitler Youth in short pants paraded through the Führer's bedroom and on into his quarters. Standing near his bed, with his face and body in the shadow and his pale hand leaning on the flounced pillow, he watched from the depths of his solitude. His castration had cut him off from human beings. His joys are not ours."

"The Führer sent his finest-looking men to death. It was his only way to possess them all."

FUNERAL RITES BY JEAN GENET



Photo: In Ropes of Rapture

"... Beauty is a terrible and awful thing! It is terrible because it never has and never can be fathomed, for God sets us nothing but riddles. Within beauty both shores meet and all contradictions exist side by side... Beauty! I cannot bear the thought that a man of noble heart and lofty mind sets out with the ideal of the Madonna and ends with the ideal of Sodom. What's still more awful is that the man with the ideal of Sodom in his soul does not renounce the ideal of the Madonna.

... Yes, man's heart is wide, too wide indeed. I'd have it narrower. The Devil only knows what to make of it! But what the intellect regards as shameful often appears splendidly beautiful to the heart. Is there beauty in Sodom? Believe me, most men find their beauty in Sodom. Did you know this secret? The dreadful thing is that beauty is not only terrifying but also mysterious. God and the Devil are fighting there, and their battlefield is the heart of man."[†]

Dostoevsky, *THE BROTHERS KARAMAZOV*



Photo above: Ginza Gangster

"My concern, what confronted me with my real problem, was beauty alone . . . When people concentrate on the idea of beauty, they are without realizing it, confronted with the darkest thoughts that exist in the world."

THE TEMPLE OF THE GOLDEN PAVILION

Photo: Blossoms of Death

"Such is the beauty of the suicide squad, which is recognized as beauty not only in the spiritual sense but, by men in general, in an ultra-erotic sense also."

SUN AND STEEL



**By Beauty
Possessed**

THE WORDS OF YUJI KISHIMOTO



Photography by Fred H. Berger/Modeling by (from left to right): Justin You and Daniel

Photo above: Tokyo Trick

"Yuichi floated on desire. The look they gave him was like that a woman feels when she passes among men and their eyes instantly undress her down to the last stitch. Practiced appraisers' eyes usually do not make mistakes. The gently sloping chest . . . the potential lovely harmony between what one saw and could not see seemed as perfect as a product of the ratio of golden section."

FORBIDDEN COLORS

ANTINOUS DIONYSOS OSIRIS

VISIONS AND VERSE BY FRED H. BERGER

Of glories past and never seen
Of glories unspoken,
a token, a dream
Graven image sees no evil
Obelisk to the sky,
phallic, primeval
Splendid ruins crumbling
A massive bust strikes my head
The beasts of the field
leave me for dead



My mouth tastes funeral
a broken urn, a shattered urinal
Dionysos-Osiris fell upon me
from on high above,
heavy and hard,
he knew how to love
A cortege of naked youths
take their fallen god in tow
and leave me to fertilize the earth
and make the flowers grow
Fair Antinous,
he knew how to love.



A Midsummer Night's Sacrifice



ILLUSTRATED BY RACHEL GIRARD
WRITTEN BY FRED H. BERGER

A black-winged Cupid flutters like a fabulous butterfly above a white-washed country villa, his luxurious feathers spangled with the fire burst of a glorious midsummer's twilight. Below, on the balcony, he spies a stunning youth; his lithe, smooth body naked to the waist, made amber by the golden sunset. Deep in pensive thought, the boy is unaware of the daemon's approach; then, hesitantly, he turns to enter the bed chamber. A radiant blonde is stretched out naked on the bed, glaring at the boy, eyes afire with scorn. With a timorous voice, he ventures the question (which is more a statement of fact), "So then, . . . you really want me to go." But before she can slash the wounded youngster yet again with the words "leave me," with a start the girl glances over to the balcony where fair Cupid has just alighted.

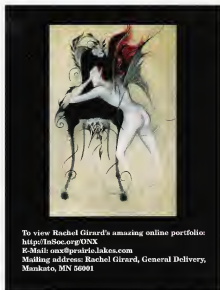
The boy turns to behold the dazzling form of the strange visitor. Thinking him the answer to his prayer, a prayer calling for the death of the lovers, he asks, with surprising assuredness, "Have you come to kill us?" With a grace not born of this world, Cupid walks up to the boy and, standing so close they can feel one another's breath on their cheeks,

whispers, "Can't you see that I have but a single arrow. If you allow me her heart, I will leave you her body, as warm as mother's milk, as soft as silk, aching for every inch of you. Her veins will pulse to the beat of another heart - your heart."

The boy took a step back, his hands folded lightly over his pounding chest, his head reeling from the sudden impact of the daemon's proposal. The girl, trembling with fright, is speechless as her lover strikes the bargain. "Yes, yes, you can take her heart," shouts the boy. With joyous desperation he leaps over the helpless beauty and seizes her from behind. Lying supine with her hands held firmly over her head, splayed upon the sheets with nothing between her bare flesh and her destiny, Cupid's diaphanous figure, silhouetted by the setting sun, assumes the archer's stance. "Please don't," she whimpers, as the boy's face, damp with excitement, is crossed by the shadow of the bow and the arrow. The sun turns blood red and fades to black.

Cupid, alone in the mist-shrouded depths of his subterranean abode raises the impaled heart, still skewered to the sharpened shaft of a boy's desire, a longing that called forth this god of the underworld. Cupid lightly salts the dark, dripping mass, and leers with impish glee. "Heart kebab, anyone?!"

FIN



Cupid: Playful cherub, or
angel of destruction?





‘Remember, man, that dust thou art,’

dust to dust

and unto dust thou shalt return.” (Genesis 3:19)

Photography by Fred H. Berger/Modeling by Christoph Boutilier

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Lyrics (abridged) from the song "Mein Herr" from the film CABARET

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better-off

without me, mein herr."

Photographed by Fred H. Berger/Modeling by Kristoffer

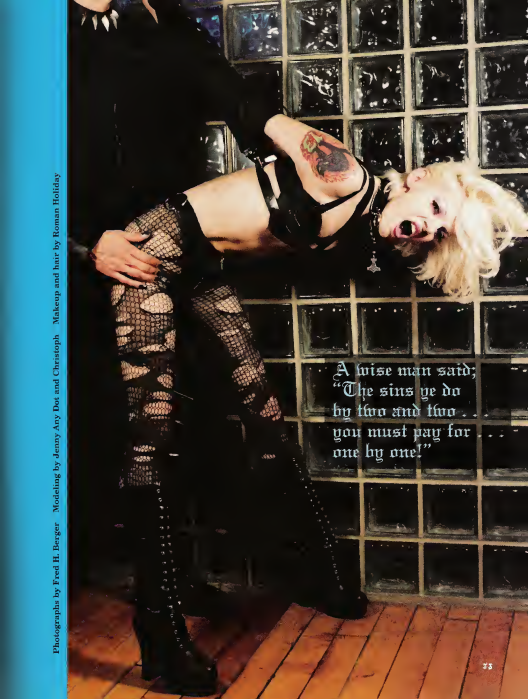


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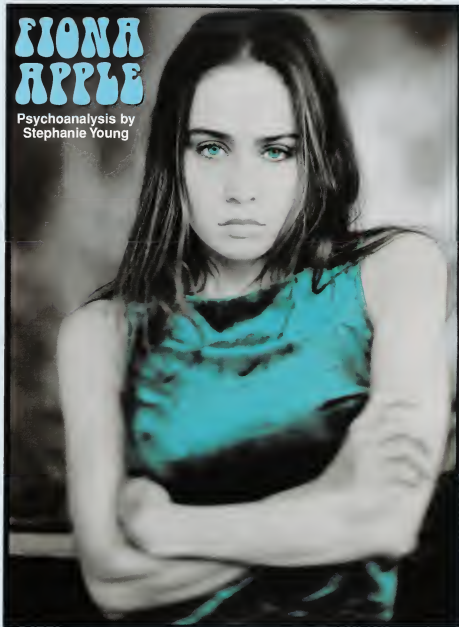




A wise man said;
"The sins ye do
by two and two . . .
you must pay for
one by one!"

FIONA APPLE

Psychoanalysis by
Stephanie Young



Because of what's happened to me, I'll probably be screwed up for the rest of my life."

Obviously, this isn't the sentiment of someone who's had an easy go of it. And despite all outward appearances, the meteoric success of 19-year-old singer, Fiona Apple, has not come without years of toil and torment. In fact, it's because of her painful past that she's driven to write music in the first place.

Evidently, most people only see the surface situation — a young, pretty and now very successful songstress who's the darling of the MTV set. What they aren't aware of is what lies beneath the sugar coating. Fiona Apple writes to exorcise some very deeply ingrained demons — something she has done since childhood to combat the internal angst and confusion. When you're in psycho-therapy at age ten, raped at eleven and sent to a school for troubled youth at twelve, you're forced to develop a self-preservation mechanism of some sort. And for Fiona, that mechanism was the written word.



PAUL MEAKER

"Nobody would take what I had to say seriously," explains Miss Apple. "I had a lot of problems at the time, and I needed to express what was going on inside of me. But at nine or ten, it's difficult to articulate very complex emotions and issues. And no one takes you seriously. So I withdrew inside myself... didn't talk to anyone... just gave people dirty looks. [The bad apple.] That made everyone think I was clinically depressed or suicidal or something. The other kids in school thought I was just plain fucking weird. Here was this little girl who stayed all to herself drawing pictures of witches and jotting down all this nonsense. But, I soon found that I could express myself much better by writing down my ideas. As a matter of fact, I used some of these writings in my songs on *TIDAL*."

In deed, *TIDAL* is a veritable guided tour of a young girl's emotional dark passage ways and corners. Fiona sheds a bright candescent flood light on these hidden places with each song on this impressive debut CD. "Sullen Girl" is about that rape (which was by a total stranger who followed her into her Manhattan apartment building). "Shadowboxer" deals with vulnerability and internal conflict. The angry "Sleep To Dream" is about an early, disastrous romantic relationship. There's certainly plenty of fuel for Fiona's internal fire. Each bad experience in her troubled youth stole a piece of her innocence, but it also added back tiny specks of wisdom. So, what we end up with is a string of gems — ten very accomplished songs for someone so new to the music business.

"I just kind of fell into this whole thing," says Fiona. "I did a demo because I felt I had to do it — much the same way I felt I had to write letters when I was a kid when something bothered me. It just so happened that a friend of mine was baby-sitting for someone in the industry, and gave them the tape. They gave it to Andy [Slater, Producer extraordinaire]. He helped me put everything together. But it all happened too quickly for me. Before I was really ready, emotionally, I found myself recording an album. Part of me just wanted to just run and hide — the way I always did when I was younger. I didn't want to be thrust in front of all these people who would be judging me. I definitely didn't want to go out on tour. I remember going home, and I would cry. But the other part of me said I had to get out there and do it — like it or not. In a way, I was saying to myself, 'Fiona, you can't withdraw into your shell anymore.' So now I have this sick psychological need to do just the opposite of keeping everything bottled up inside. I have a need to get it all out. It's almost like I'm subconsciously trying to correct all the damage that early therapy did to me."

Well, let's hope it's not all corrected. Sorry, but if being a little emotionally disturbed helps facilitate something like *TIDAL*, then who would want Fiona to find complete normalcy — bland, boring normalcy. †

"And there's too much going on. But it's calm under the waves, in the blue of my oblivion. Under the waves in the blue of my oblivion. Is that why they call me a sullen girl — sullen girl. They don't know I used to sail the deep and tranquil sea. But big washed me ashore and he took my pearl. And left an empty shell of me. But it's calm under the waves in the blue of my oblivion." — "Sullen Girl"



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RASPUTINA

Strange tale by Bill Snyder

Images by Roberto Espinosa

While their peers were picking up dolls and jump ropes to play with, three young girls from three very separate parts of the world were picking up cellos. The whys and wherefores remain lost with time. This cosmic thread, however, would tie them together through the years until they would meet in person in Brooklyn to form the mythical Ladies' Cello Society. Melora was from Kansas, Julia was from Canada and Agnieszka hailed from Poland. The precursor to the band Rasputina was thus born. Perhaps this group should, indeed, be a fairy tale—one of damsels, knights and ogres... an amalgam of many strange legends and myths... part Rasputin,

part Rasputina. Childlike in their form and appearance, yet almost frighteningly dark and adult in their meaning, Rasputina, like a fairy tale, often holds more human truth than the *New York Times*, but nobody's going to spell it out for you. You have to search the music and put it together for yourself.

Whatever truths lie buried in the tale of Rasputina, I was bound to find them out as I met the band at the warehouse apartment/rehearsal space of Melora Creeger, the band's founder and songwriter.

As I exited the subway in Melora's Brooklyn neighborhood, I was immediately struck by the lack of human inhabitants amongst

the warehouses, trucks and ill-repaired roads. As I made my way toward the designated building, a quick thought passed through my head — "only two creatures could survive in this part of New York, artists and rodents."

Finally reaching the building, I made my way through the narrow, dusty halls of the converted warehouse until I reached Melora's second floor apartment. A quick knock revealed nobody home. Luckily, I was able to find a chair next to the door where I sat patiently. About ten minutes later, I heard a door slam. A woman's voice asked, "what's that white powder... rat poison?" A man's answered, "probably." To which the woman replied, "I had a mouse die in the middle of the floor." My suspicions about the neighborhood inhabitants were confirmed. Moments later, the bodies that went with the voices emerged. It was Melora and drummer Steve Moses. After quick introductions, Melora led the way into her apartment. I have to admit, that entering the apartment, I was a bit uneasy. From the first time I had heard Rasputina's debut album, **THANKS FOR THE ETHER**, it had haunted me. I couldn't quite figure out why. Perhaps it was the minor keys that are so rare in popular music, or maybe it was the sadness of three cellos. Melora would later explain, "It's kind of a manipulative album, because it easily sounds like regret. A complicated emotion to express is not hard to express on the cello."

Rasputina's music is filled with haunting images of blood, bones and young girls withering away as they desperately strive to achieve womanhood. The lyrics tell tales ranging from ice skating to girlish obsession to the death of hundreds of women in the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire (a sweatshop fire in New York shortly after the turn of the century). Dressed in Victorian corsets, the band presents these songs with a childlike innocence that seems incapable of acknowledging the horrors they describe. Even speaking with Melora in her home, there is a certain innocence in the way she describes the process of writing the song, "My Little Shirtwaist Fire." In her high childlike voice, she goes on about the event. "The beautiful girls looked in their rooms sewing and sewing. Somebody told me recently that when the fire started, some people jumped out the windows, and there was nothing down at the bottom. All these people thought there was a net or something, so they were diving out the windows. I think they finally made a human chain, but a lot of people died." She explained that she tried as hard as she could to imagine what it would have been like to have been in that fire. Listening to the song, I had to wonder if somehow she had been there.

More than anything, perhaps it was Rasputina's ability to speak of extreme horror with complete innocence that was haunting me. Whatever it was, for the first time in my life, I had no idea what to expect from the home I was about to enter or the band I was about to meet. So, with a bit of trepidation, I followed them through the door Melora's apartment is an apparent contradiction not unlike the innocence and horror of her song writing. Most of its contents appear to be older than Melora herself. Old warehouse floors and walls covered in peeling gray paint, racks of vintage clothing, stacks of books, including *Sybil*, *The Family*, and titles by Ayn Rand, Gertrude Stein and Nietzsche. Shelves are filled with jars of pennies and old coke bottles. Old photo montages, dried flowers, a deer head, Christmas lights and pictures of Marilyn Monroe, Charles Manson, Sharon Tate, etc. cover the walls. I make my way through the apartment to take a seat in the living area as cellists Julia Kent and Agnieszka Ryska join us. Melora breaks out bagels, muffins and an espresso machine. The story of Rasputina was about to unfold. Melora explains that the concept for this group began with her desire to escape the typical guitar-rock band arrangement. She took out an ad in the *Village Voice* looking for like-minded cellists, and

received a response from Julia. This duo began playing with a variety of third cellists and drummers. After recording an Ep and catching the attention of Columbia Records, Melora and Julia were soon joined by Agnieszka (just off the plane from Poland) and Steve (who met Julia in the subway).

"Rasputina is comprised the way it is because cellos don't mix well with guitars," says Melora. "I've played in more typical rock bands, and you could never hear the cello. It's quite enjoyable writing music specifically for this instrument."

The conversation then turns to Rasputina's lyrical content. Melora explains that she's more inspired by books and movies than she is by other music. As one might conclude by a quick look around her home, Melora seems to be fascinated by the more grotesque figures of history, and particularly by what she describes as "the border between absurd things and terrifying things." Surprisingly, she also seems oddly unaffected by the more terrifying images of her music.

"I'm not squeamish," she says. "I think I've been desensitized by TV and the movies. I'm pretty immune, and that comes out sort of subconsciously in my writing."

Melora is inspired by much simpler things as well. For instance, the song "Mr. E. Leon Raulis" from the CD was inspired by an old turn-of-the-century photograph of a well-dressed man she possesses. "Nobody ever gets to see this picture," she muses. "But, here it is. Ahhhh... he's so cute. It also has inscriptions on the back, which was the source for the song's chorus. I think he knows we're talking about him every time we play the song."

Much of Rasputina's lyrics have this mythical, magical quality. Even the title of the CD itself, **THANKS FOR THE ETHER**, has this ethereal source of inspiration. "The Victorians believed that the gases in the Earth's atmosphere, which they called ether, were the source of things like creativity & inspiration," concludes Melora. "So, we'd like to thank the ether."

And, we'd like to thank you, Melora, for your hospitality. Watch for the new Rasputina Ep, **TRANSYLVANIAN REGURGITATION**. It's re-mixed by Marilyn Manson himself. †



Story by John Calk
Photos by Tom LeGoff

Mors

Eric and Lisa Hammer create the haunting sounds of Mors Syphilitica

Once upon a time, on a chilly night in Boston's North End, I followed a stream of dark overcoats and pale faces into a warm shithole of a club — drawn by the soaring soprano/alto summons of the lead singer of the band, Requiem in White. Although raw at that time, Requiem would steadily refine their signature blend of dark rock and operatic/medieval vocals — a distinct sound that would soon place them at the forefront of the underground gothic movement. Significantly, Requiem in White's consistent refusal to grant interviews or take part in any publicity kept them from attaining the fame allotted many of the pale-faced disco-mongers, deep voiced posers and other charlatans hawking their wares in the gothic mainstream.

Despite this lack of exposure, Requiem was consistently ranked in the top ten lists of premier underground fanzines and radio stations. Their cult status was widespread and undisputed. Eventually, the band's lead singer, Lisa, and the guitarist, Eric, were married — thus consummating a musical alliance that would outlast the band itself. And then, at the moment when other bands would be poised to sell out, Requiem in White broke up — securing forever the group's shroud of mystery.

After what seemed like an eternity, Lisa and Eric Hammer re-emerged with a new band and a new CD — both named Mors

Syphilitica. Their debut performance in N.Y.C. under this new moniker was a huge success. The venue was packed past the legal capacity with an army of devotees. Clearly the Hammers were far from forgotten. The show itself was a real revelation: I was stunned by Mors' tremendous, hypnotic power. Lisa Hammer's vocals had reached maturity, combining breathtaking natural talent with finely honed technique and a riveting stage presence. She swooned on stage like a pre-Raphaelite somnambulist, her voice and movements seemingly directed by the wistful melancholy of the collective unconscious. And coiling behind her, Eric's haunting, ever-present guitar filled the room with cascading melodies. His unsettlingly alluring presence exuded the aloof, mesmerizing power of a brooding Rasputin. They were backed by David on bass and Hajji on drums — both of whom compliment the ensemble with their excellent musicianship and romantic/primitive image. Listen to the band's self-titled CD and you'll agree: Mors Syphilitica is no capricious love child of its former band, but is instead a focused, mature extension of the key aesthetic principles that made Requiem great. Eric's compositions have increased in their subtlety and have become masterful, rarefied expressions of his genius. Songs like "Below the Baleful Star" and "Passing Shadows" are testimony to that.

Just recently, I was able to score the demo tape of Mors' upcoming

Syphilifica



For info on
Mors Syphilifica
releases, see the
ad on page 54.

release, **PRIM ROSE**. On it, Eric and Lisa again demonstrate their incredible musical prowess with cleverly written songs. †

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RISE OF THE FALLEN ANGEL

MARILYN MANSON

by Ty Batirbek

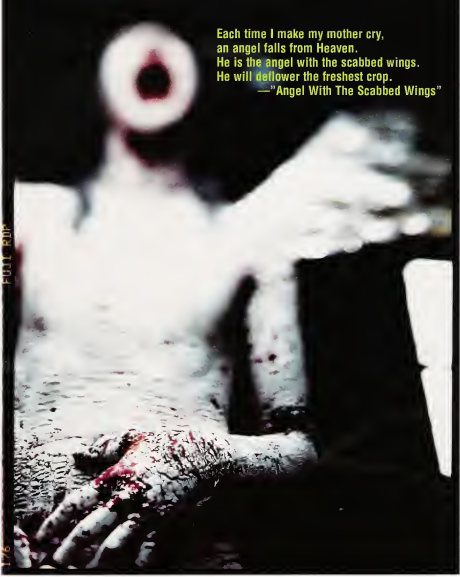
The lyrics and ideals expressed on this album are those of a character called Antichrist Superstar, who is portrayed by me. In that sense, this is an auto-biographical collection of songs. In another sense, this character is portrayed by every other person in America as well. And those who fail to realize and admit this are the ones who will be afraid of and offended by this album. This is what you should fear. You are what you should fear." — Mr. Marilyn Manson

The past several months have in dead been trying times. Marilyn Manson has been trying and trying to explain the whole concept behind Antichrist Superstar, the character, and **ANTICHRIST SUPERSTAR**, the CD. But the misconceptions and misinterpretations keep rearing their ugly heads — Marilyn Manson is evil, he worships Satan, he's trying to corrupt the youth of America with his music, etc., etc. So let's try once again in the pages of *Propaganda* to set the record straight.

Marilyn works in metaphor and allegory. The album imparts the tale of a being — the Antichrist — who changes form through metamorphosis from a lowly subterranean worm into a beautiful, winged angel. (Although, going by the photo on the opposite page, beauty is definitely in the eye of the beholder.) And this is precisely the point Marilyn is trying to make. The being believes itself to be beautiful, yet it is scorned by a hostile world which believes this angel to be hideous, demonic and evil. It is, in deed, the misunderstood Fallen Angel of antiquity — the Antichrist.

"It is this misunderstanding," explains Marilyn, "the blurring of the lines between an angel and a devil — good and evil — that makes people so hostile and resistant to this message. But isn't man himself imperfect according to biblical teachings? Didn't he fall from grace in the Garden of Eden by choosing the wrong path? According to this Judeo-Christian belief, man has both good and evil within him. Thus we are all fallen angels. The allegory describes me and everyone else. You have to accept the existence of both sides of human nature — the worm and the angel. There are no absolutes in morality. One man's villain is another man's hero. That's why I say, you have to judge things for yourself. You can't rely on some strict dogma, organized religion, to tell you what's right and what's wrong. And that's all the Fallen Angel, the Antichrist, Lucifer — whatever — represents. Someone who was exiled from Heaven and fell to Earth because he chose to be an individual instead of mindlessly following the herd. That's all I've ever conveyed to our fans. Be your own leader; think for yourself. It has nothing to do with worshipping evil. In Anton LaVey's 'Satanic Bible,' Satan is used only as a metaphor to illustrate this concept."

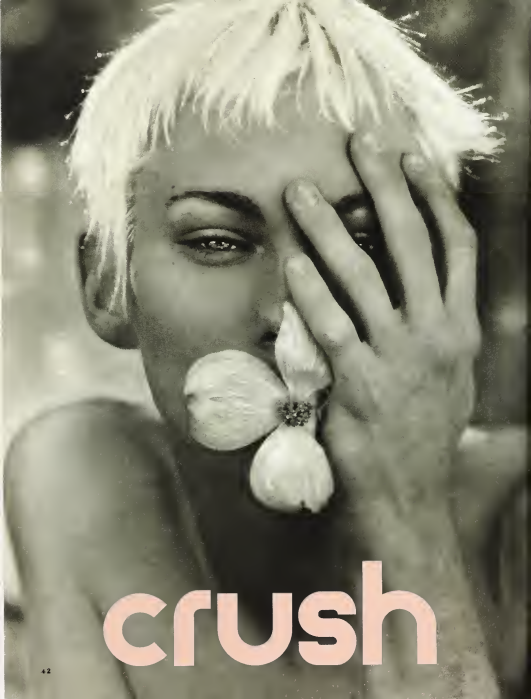
Marilyn can often be heard quoting Anton LaVey. After all, he is a card-carrying member of LaVey's Church of Satan. However, there is much more to Mr. Manson than just this frequently-mentioned relationship. The band has recently dabbled in other forms of mysticism and magic.



Each time I make my mother cry,
an angel falls from Heaven.
He is the angel with the scabbed wings.
He will deflower the freshest crop.
— "Angel With The Scabbed Wings"

"Hebraic Kabbalism and numerology are very powerful forces," he adds. "And we have combined these disciplines with computer technology and recording effects to create a musical ritual on the album that would bring about the Apocalypse. This isn't a physical Armageddon, but more a state of mind, where the old order of thinking is destroyed, and people start believing in themselves as powerful entities — being their own gods. I guess, to the established order, that's even more dangerous than worshipping a devil."

Marilyn says these precepts came to him in a series of dreams — "like revelations coming to John The Baptist." As we investigate each song on the **ANTICHRIST SUPERSTAR** CD, these revelations unfold like the Dead Sea Scrolls. The child in "Kinderleid" — ("When I was a worm, I thought I couldn't get through it. Because today is black, because there's no turning back. Your lies have watered me, and I have become the strongest weed.") The transformation in "Wormboy" — ("The world shudders as the worm gets his wings. Heaven becomes Hell") **END**



crush

Dr. The T. ... to King
I can't stop thinking you're
but I have hope at night
will to help it is impossible
my mind I can make some
it will be and all for the
only I can know how to
of the ... my ...
when they have ...
all a test I could ...
I cannot be one of ...
any more of the ...

Transcribed at
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Arch of the

switchblade symphony

by Paul Hart



Tina and Susan of Switchblade Symphony take a ride on the dark wave.

David P.

Listening to the haunting melodies of the band, Switchblade Symphony, you get the distinct feeling that these enchanted sounds are emanating from some demon-possessed, antique music box. And seeing the band live on stage gives you the distinct impression that you're observing the demented residents of some haunted dollhouse. These are the dichotomies that spring to mind with this band—frightening and spine-chilling, yet innocent and childlike. This nightmarish tableau is not by accident; it's the clever construction of two very talented ladies—lead vocalist/lyricist Tina Roof and keyboardist/composer extraordinaire, Susan Wallace.

Since Switchblade Symphony formed about eight years ago in San Francisco, their stature has grown steadily with each successive musical release and live tour. More and more audiences have fallen under the sinister spell Tina and Susan have woven. Though there have been several changes in support personnel, the dynamic duo have kept S.S. on a steady course with what they call "classical instrumentation, operatic vocal arrangements and a driving industrial beat." Tina's dramatic

vocal delivery and stage persona have direct roots in her background training. "I was taking classical voice lessons for awhile," she confides. "I was involved with several theatrical productions and musicals. That's probably why I sometimes vocalize in character voices. It's quite common in that genre. I even considered Julliard at one time to study opera."

It is easy to spot this unique approach to the band's musical execution just by listening to their releases—the *SERPENTINE GALLERY* CD of 1995, the *SCRAPBOOK* "mini-CD" of early 1997, and the upcoming release due out next month. With their recent successful tours supporting the likes of Christian Death, Type-O-Negative and The Sisters of Mercy, Susan and Tina have captured a legion of new fans. Cleopatra Records has done a masterful job in promoting this truly novel act by including them in their *GOTH BOX* CD collection and corresponding video compilation. The "Clown" video is a visual acid trip.

Switchblade Symphony is so compelling, all it takes is a little exposure to them to become instantly enamored. Write to the band at: P.O. Box 170443, San Francisco, CA, 94117. †

article by Paul Hart

"Drama of the self." That's what the German band, Das Ich, tries to get across in their much-heralded new CD, *EGODRAM* (drama of ego). Bandmates Stephan and Bruno explore the dark underbelly of human psychology with this new release.

"It's a unique way of looking at individualism," explains vocalist Stephan. "How society as a whole and the mass media affects every individual. No one lives in a vacuum. We are all affected by outside forces."

das ich

Now, we can add *EGODRAM* as one of those forces. It's guaranteed to affect all who listen to it. Das Ich combines classical/psycho arrangements with industrial/techno electronics and rhythms. This combination makes for a powerful mix. (I'll make you forget all about your Special K Kool-Aid.) This is great club music... which is why Das Ich made such a huge splash with the audiences on their last American tour this past spring, as well as on their famous Procession tour a couple of years ago. As you can see from the adjacent photo, Stephan and the band spare no effort in creating that sense of "ego drama." Their live shows are true theatrical spectacles where Stephan stalks the stage like some demented man-ette in lamcloth and dreadlocks.

Das Ich's *DIE PROPHTEN CD* is a springtling collection of songs which the band recorded from 1989 to 1993. Make no mistake, the group is unabashedly pushing the artistic envelope into heretofore uncharted realms of abjection and majesty. It's over-the-top Teutonic angst at its morbid best.

For more information contact: Danse Macabre, Luitpoldplatz 18, 8580 Bayreuth, Germany. ☐



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Carissa Darcian

Over the past eight years or so, no band has more defined the direction of the L.A. goth scene than Wreckage. Along with his production company, Wreckage Productions, the band's founder, Tony Lestat, has been unmatched in how prolific he is. Besides releasing music with his band, Tony has produced several "tribute" albums to various legendary Gothic and Death-rock groups, including The Sisters of Mercy, Bauhaus, Joy Division, The Damned, The Cure and The Mission. Each tribute contains a fascinating collection of songs which uniquely interprets the music of the band being honored.

Finally, with a completely revamped line-up, Tony has turned his attention to his band, Wreckage. They have recently released a groundbreaking CD called **BAD VIBES**, which is guaranteed to create vibrations throughout the gothic underworld. With songs like "Sister Night," "Evil Thoughts" and "Psycho Drive," Wreckage is poised to take the nation by storm. This is exactly what they plan to do with their current tour. Just last month, Tony and the guys stole the show at California's "Darkwave" festival. Also playing at this gathering of dark souls were such west coast giants as The Shroud and The Prophets.

"This is the first time in two and a half years that Wreckage has played live," says Tony. "It's good to get out there and play the new material in front of live audiences. The line-up of this band has gone through several changes over the past couple of years, and that made it difficult to tour. I'm happy with who's playing with me now."

Tony's partners in crime are Everett Thompson on bass and Dusty Jones (formerly of Human Drama and Reverence), who plays guitar and does the programming. Along with Tony's vocals, this group has put together a unique sound that is both chilling and powerful. In addition, the song writing itself is just plain excellent. Tony has been at this for several years, and his musical prowess and professionalism clearly shows.

"I'm also releasing a compilation CD of rare and unreleased tracks of earlier Wreckage material," says Tony. "It's called **THE GOOD, THE BAD, THE UGLY AND THE DEAD**. It's a good representation of what Wreckage has done over the years." Write to: Wreckage, 638 W. Knoll Drive #4, West Hollywood, CA. 90069. †

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BLACK ATMOSPHERE

The best way to describe the haunting new CD from the band, **Black Atmosphere**, is (as they put it on their own flyer) "hypnotized ecstasism for fashionably despaired souls." The music is intense, dark and passionate.

The title of the CD, **ENRAPTURE**, is thus very appropriate. This Seattle-based band has been putting out quality darkwave/gothic emissions for several years now. Back in the group's infancy, the grunge movement was all the rage in that north-west town. Founding members Christoph and Brian persevered despite swimming against the tidal wave of Nirvana, Pearl Jam, Soundgarden and the rest. And thank goodness they did. **ENRAPTURE** may be the finest gathering of enchanted tunes since The Sisters slapped **FIRST AND LAST ALWAYS** together. Think of this group of melodies as a bouquet of wilted black roses. Songs like "Love Lies Bleeding," "Time Falling" and "Bridge of Change" are true soundscapes of emotion and atmosphere (black and otherwise).

"I think our sincerity comes across in the songs," says vocalist Christoph. "It's emotion from a spiritual and global aspect. I'm also very much inspired simply by internal feelings — questions within myself." Heady stuff to say the least — and it's something you shouldn't miss out on. To get info on the CD and their other great stuff, contact **Black Atmosphere**, P.O. Box 20836, Seattle, WA 98102. †



by Paul Hart



by Paul Hart

Olga of Empire 44
kisses the lips of
the prophet.



Liers in Wait is dead! Long live Empire 44! After fourteen years of tearing up the Atlanta scene with their bombastic industrial death, **Liers in Wait** has been transformed. The band began its metamorphosis to its present form, **Empire 44**, soon after the departure of lead vocalist, William Anderson. The rest of the band remains the same however, with Erik Sizemore (guitarist) and Olga Gazman (keyboards) sharing the vocal duties.

Liers in Wait accomplished so much during their long stint. Their final album, **SPEAR OF DESTINY**, made C.M.J.'s top 30 chart in fifty-two American cities. They shared the stage with the likes of Christian Death, Electric Hellfire Club, Murphy's Law and KMFDM.

Now, **Empire 44** continues the legacy with the amazing **EMPIRE 44 — LYING IN WAIT** CD. Tunes like "Epic Of Creation," "Crash & Bleed" and "Shockwaves" will send you soaring. Also adding to **Empire 44**'s chilling sound are Jon Vick on acoustic & electric guitars and Grant Dawson on drums & bass. (**EMPIRE 44**, P.O. Box 55140, Atlanta, Ga. 30308). †

Angels Of Venice

By Paul Hart

Another golden California sunset over the Pacific. Through the haze of the ocean air, a haunting melody could be heard coming from the boardwalk along Venice Beach. A crowd had gathered around the source of this enchanting sound. Three angelic-looking women in flowing white gowns seemed to be the center of this attention. There were white flowers in their hair, and each was holding a musical instrument — one a harp, one a cello, and the other a flute.

What melodies they played... at times darkly medieval, at times joyously classical. The crowd roared its approval. These three songstresses were like Angels bringing the sounds of heaven down to the good earth for the masses to enjoy. This trio would appropriately be named The Angels of Venice.

Since those golden days on the beach at Venice, this amazing threesome has brought their music to a much larger audience through their two remarkable releases — the self-titled **THE ANGELS OF VENICE** and the more recent, **AWAKE INSIDE A DREAM**. Both are masterfully written and performed. These Angels are easily the most talented musicians I've written about in a long time. Carol Tatum plays harp, Suzanne Teng plays flute, and Peggy Baldwin belts out a mean cello.

Besides just being accomplished instrumentally, The Angels of Venice have a real flair for style. The booklet of their **AWAKE INSIDE A DREAM** CD is adorned with beautiful medieval art and graphics. And, of course, there are angels everywhere. "One of my favorite images," says Carol, "is black angels. They're dark and mysterious. That's the direction I'd like to take our music. The third CD will probably reflect that." Write to: Angels of Venice, P.O. Box 50694, Pasadena, CA. 91115. †



Nils Vidstrand Studios



By Paul Hart

FEAR CULT

By the titles of their songs alone, you can get a sense of what the Tucson-based band, Fear Cult, is all about. "Wrapped In Passion," "My Beloved Immortality," "Dressed For Death" and "Suicide" are just some of the selections contained on this group's outstanding second release, **YOUR DARKEST ROMANCE**. This CD is filled with emotion and a dark, lush sensuality.

The band's founder and song writer, Matt Fear, has an incredible sense of drama in his music, which he describes as "abstract and experimental synthesized gothic." He also credits legendary death-rock outfits like London After Midnight for inspiring him to start writing.

"One of the tracks on the CD," Claims Matt, "is dedicated to the genius of Sean Brennan and London After Midnight. It's called 'Nightmare Never Ending'."

Joining Matt on this mystical journey is Cindy Wilkins, who adds her very personal touch to Fear Cult's sound with instrumentation and inspiration. This duo informs their fans of the latest developments concerning the band with a newsletter called "Sanctuary." Through this publication and their CDs, Fear Cult has attracted an international following. Matt says he receives letters from all corners of the planet. In fact, on the liner notes of **YOUR DARKEST ROMANCE**, Matt goes out of his way to thank the band's fans — "both near and far." If you're interested in joining Fear Cult's growing legion of followers, just send two 32 cent stamps to: Sanctuary, 5635 E. Fairmount, Tucson, AZ. 85712 (to get a copy) †

the CHANGELINGS



The Changelings create an atmosphere that is both mysterious and sensual.

Music has been a tool of man since his creation. It has been used to inspire us to achieve greatness as well as help us express our sorrows and pain. It can be a reflection of our darker selves, or it can set our spirits free.

The music of the Atlanta based band, The Changelings, does a bit of all these things. While they are not truly gothic, they have an unmistakable dark edge. While they aren't truly classical, there is a definite Baroque presence. They list Bach and Paganini as having influenced their sound. However, you want to label them, their music is haunting and inviting. The Changelings' self-titled CD (on World Serpent) is a masterpiece of combining different elements. Reggiana Morris' voice shimmers across an ever-changing musical landscape. Paul Mercer's approach to the violin is daring and innovative. Chandler Renz provides the ceremonial tribal drums and bass. Damon Young's Middle Eastern influences are clearly felt with his use of the sitar, tanpura and guitar. Nick Pagan presides over everything with his impressive key boards weaving an intricate tapestry of sound. (What follows is an interview with the band.)

PROPAGANDA: Would you consider your music "Gothic"?

Paul Mercer: "Gothic," as a label, has become completely worthless. It doesn't describe anything because it's used as a catchall category for anything vaguely dark.

Nick Pagan: We're all okay with being described as "etherial."

Paul Mercer: Because that definition is open. It's still relatively new as a definition, musically.

Your music is very emotional. How do you feel when you're writing something?

Reggiana Morris: It's coming completely from you as a whole, and not just from some part of your brain that's telling you to play this sort of music for some particular end. It's music for its own sake.

Nick Pagan: I think when you go with total emotion, and you're not thinking in terms of contrivances or trying to fit someone else's mold or expectation, you do create music that's hard to classify. It's very spontaneous.

Paul Mercer: I'm not saying that we're Suif or anything, because I don't know if my definition of nirvana matches theirs... but they play or dance or sing until they reach this exalted state where they think they touch God. Our process to writing is similar. It's pure emotion.

(This mystical quality of The Changelings' music is evident on their CD, with songs like "Solitude," "Awakening" and "Incantation.") The band has just released a new CD called **TERRA FIRMA** — which is truly amazing. For info on their two albums, contact:

The Changelings, P.O. Box 5583, Atlanta, GA. 31107. †



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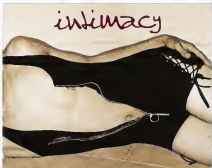


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REVIEW AND PHOTO BY FRED H. BERGER

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